

3/4/69

Dear George,

Your new news letter is good. It is a service to indicate the case was so much less than we had a right to expect. Art is great, though I think his own disillusionment is such that today he may be more pessimistic than warranted. However the truth is that over the past more than a year, New Orleans has turned off many of those who were with us, just as Jim's public appearances and so much of the worse than nonsense he uttered convinced so many.

The real reason I write is to tell you to hold off on the transcripts. It might be a good idea to publish them, but I doubt if it is from the N.O. papers, for several reasons. These include incompleteness and inaccuracy. Some of the transcripts, as presented, I am told, are not accurate. The are in some cases paraphrased and in others show they have been edited.

I spoke to Moo yesterday. He now says they will be getting the transcripts but he does not know when. I asked for copies of Finck, Frazier and Shaneyfelt right off the bat. I had already asked someone else who probably has access elsewhere if I could borrow them. Bud and I will get together tomorrow. There is no doubt the Department of Justice has bought at least one set. We will undertake to see if we can get access to those. If we get any you, of course, will be welcome to a copy. We plan to Xerox what we can get. However, even this will run into an enormous cost. I do not know if you have any idea how the pages mount up when the court reporter is paid by the page!

Also, have you really thought it out? There is an awful lot of plain crap in those transcripts. Printing them might cost as much as publishing a book, which could do a lot more good. There is remarkable little in them. The only really hot stuff is from POST MORTEM, the book I wanted Pauley to read. I gave them copies in January. Nichols stayed there through the last part and helped them understand it. The whole military bit and the failure to trace the so-called non-fatal wound is in it, and much more. So, is it worth printing all of those really pointless words for the few that have significance? The admissions they got from Shaneyfelt and Frazier could be adequately covered in a single issue of your letter. They are not new. I am not alone in having already published all or most of them and I am confident the same is true of Sylvia Meagher.

Meanwhile, the charging of Shaw with perjury means that the end of proceedings may not be over. Nor is it necessarily true that he will be the only one with a charge against him. I think there is an open and shut case against Finck. I also think they went off half-cocked again, really didn't think the Shaw thing out, and know so little about their own "contribution", Shaw, that their charges doesn't even cover all his false swearing. They missed so much in this trial, so much there is no excuse for. Shaw's character witness, the man who swore Shaw worked so hard, etc., perjured himself (and Shaw with him) on at least one point. He actually fired Shaw. He gave him the choice of quitting and getting a big sendoff. This is hardly "completely voluntarily".... And there is an awful lot that just wasn't picked up in the cross examination. In short, after all that time and all that talk, they had not prepared their case and did not do the minimum that could have been expected of them on what others had done for them... For more than a year I had been warning them against Tom Bethell, and while Louis Ivon at least was in agreement, they kept him on. I stipulated that anything I sent be kept away from him and Louis set up a special file in his own office from which, nonetheless, things still disappeared. Now they finally caught him, too late. He has confessed giving the entire case to the defense. Do not publish this until they do. With all of Garrison's talk of agents and stuff like that, this is worse than unperdonable. But this also is the kind of office that is. I encourage you to preserve your own independence and independent judge. Best to you all,

Afterthought: I wrote you in too-great haste, before dawn. It is still before breakfast, but I have been thinking while doing other work, putting together the appendix for COUP D'ETAT, as I learned from your fether.

I realize that some or much of what I say and have said may seem hard to believe or may be unwelcome. I assure you it is understated, the situation in N.O. is that bad. This is the only reason I kept going there after I had done my own book on it, to do the work they were not doing in their own hack yard, where it was indispensable for them to. If you want, I'll be glad to discuss this with you. Perhaps you and Nichols would like to do it at the same time? If so, wait until a time when the rates are lowest, even if it means getting me out of bed.

Let me give you an example of what should be comprehensible: They took anyx awful whipping on Shaneyfelt, needlessly, for they could have used him to destroy the whole thing or had him on a perjury charge. Now Mark was there, and while I have a very low opinion of him as a person and of his knowledge of the facts he could have helped. Art's point is well taken. He kept telling me how much I was needed there. True. But no one would have listened. They could have learned some of what they needed and didn't know from him, and he did not have to be in the courtroom to answer questions or comment on testimony. I was available by phone. I had given them a memo on Shaneyfelt, provided them with a witness who destroyed Shaneyfelt (Willis) and more, a new witness who did this all over again and added detail on the actual assassination (Mrs. Willis). They are dominated by a vanity, that they are the sum total of all knowledge and importance. And they know next to nothing. So, they were too vain to phone me. When, belatedly, they had to face the realization that they could not longer go it alone, they phoned Vince Selandria and asked him to go there. First it was too late and then it was too little for Vince, I regret to say, has become paranoid and he abdicated two years ago and has been preaching futility since. The cross-examinations show he added nothing. Maggie was available by phone. When you finally learn the story of what happened in Washington, where we were in pay dirt and did mine many nuggets, over their active opposition, an incredible story, you will see another facet of this. If Wecht is ever out there, ask him....The only reason I was not there is, really, because they didn't want me. They pretended otherwise. They asked me to go 1/19, after I cancelled my reservations to go 1/18. Four of them, at one time. I did. They did not want the truth. I stayed there five days and had to return to DC for that proceeding, which was based on my work. I had an apartment available, free, in N.O., on my return. It was barren. I had available a cot and a chair and table, all I needed. I asked they make arrangements for the linens so I would not have to carry them in addition to all the clothing and files. That was too much trouble. I asked that they begin to keep their word about paying my expenses (I have spent about ~~\$1~~ \$1,500 for them, uncompensated though promised) although they had said they also had to pay me for my time (which I never asked). I just didn't have the money to return. And I live there unbelievably inexpensively. I spent two weeks in June-July and ate only four real meals. This gives you a bit of the picture. Now if you want to know how they spend money, I'll tell you. Speaking of money, if you sent the check, cancel it for it has not arrived....If you find what I say disagreeable, then please understand why I say it and take the time to. I want you people to survive this bad interlude, to preserve what credibility you have earned, not to be regarded as tails on the Garrison kite. By all means help where you can (as I have and will), but do not agree with what you cannot, do not apologize for what can't be excused, be independent. It is difficult to be certain I can make this clear and comprehensible when it is so complicated, with so many strange and unexpected factors all tangled. I think you would do well to talk to Art, but not to be discouraged by the depressed state in which I am confident you will find him. And try and disassociate from all the crap that has been issuing from above you, the phoney witnesses to nothing, the nonexistent quotations, the various snares and illusions retailed as reality. Hurriedly, HW